

My Dear Brothers and Sisters,

Instead of the usual Fourth Sunday of Ordinary Time, the Church celebrates today the Feast of the Presentation of the Lord in the Temple (February 2). This celebration takes place 40 days after Christmas, and remembers how, in accordance with the Jewish Law, Jesus was presented in the Temple. What makes this event special is that despite the fact that Jesus looked like every other 40 day-old baby brought to the Temple, Simeon recognized Him for who He was and spoke prophetically about Him.

Simeon was a righteous and devout man filled with the Holy Spirit. Somehow, at some time, God had revealed to him that he would see the Christ before he died. Touched by the Holy Spirit in this moment of grace, he took Jesus in his arms and proclaims:

Now, Master, you may let your servant go in peace, according to your word, for my eyes have seen your salvation, which you prepared in the sight of all the peoples: a light for revelation to the Gentiles, and glory for your people Israel. (Luke 2:29-32)

With this prayer (now prayed by the Church as part of *Compline*, or Night Prayer, every night), Simeon shows how he has trusted God, and that he is ready to go home to God.

Note, also, at the end of his prayer, he calls Jesus the “light for revelation to the Gentiles.” It is because of this title that we celebrate today as *Candlemas* – a day to bless candles. As Jesus is the Light of the World, each candle is a symbol of He who brings the light.

Light.

How many times have I gone bumbling around in the darkness, stubbing my toe, or knocking my shin into a coffee table?! And this is *us* in this world of sin. We may think we have enough light to navigate in our world, but the truth is that without Jesus, everything is shadows, hard to see. When Jesus shines His light into our lives, it may sting and even blind us at first (think of when someone wakes you from sleep by turning on the overhead light in your room!!). Yet, without the light of Christ, right seems wrong and wrong seems right. Without Christ, we don’t see the obstacles blocking our way (like that coffee table) to real and abundant life!

Do we want light? Do we want to know what is right and true and will bring true light? I think we would say “yes” and our hearts yearn for “yes” ... but when it comes to the changes we will have to make when it comes down to it, the “yes” is much harder than to say, “No!” Yet to live without the light of Christ is to live a half-life. While His light stings and blinds, it brings healing and life.

What do I mean? How often I have experienced this: some deep secret, some struggle I have that I would dare tell no one for fear of being exposed and the shame in which it holds me. Yet, as soon as I muster the courage to bring it to Confession – to bring it to the light – I experience not shame, but relief, healing and forgiveness. While there is something very natural about finding relief when we bring things from darkness to light, when it is brought to the light of Christ – the healer – suddenly that which was the skeleton in the closet becomes a trophy of God’s incredible power!

Jesus Christ is “**a light for revelation to the Gentiles**” – aka: all of us. His light shines through our darkness. The question is: Am I willing to let His light in? Will I open my eyes here and struggle through the blindness to let my eyes adjust to His light, or will I stay holed up in a dark cave of my own little world?